

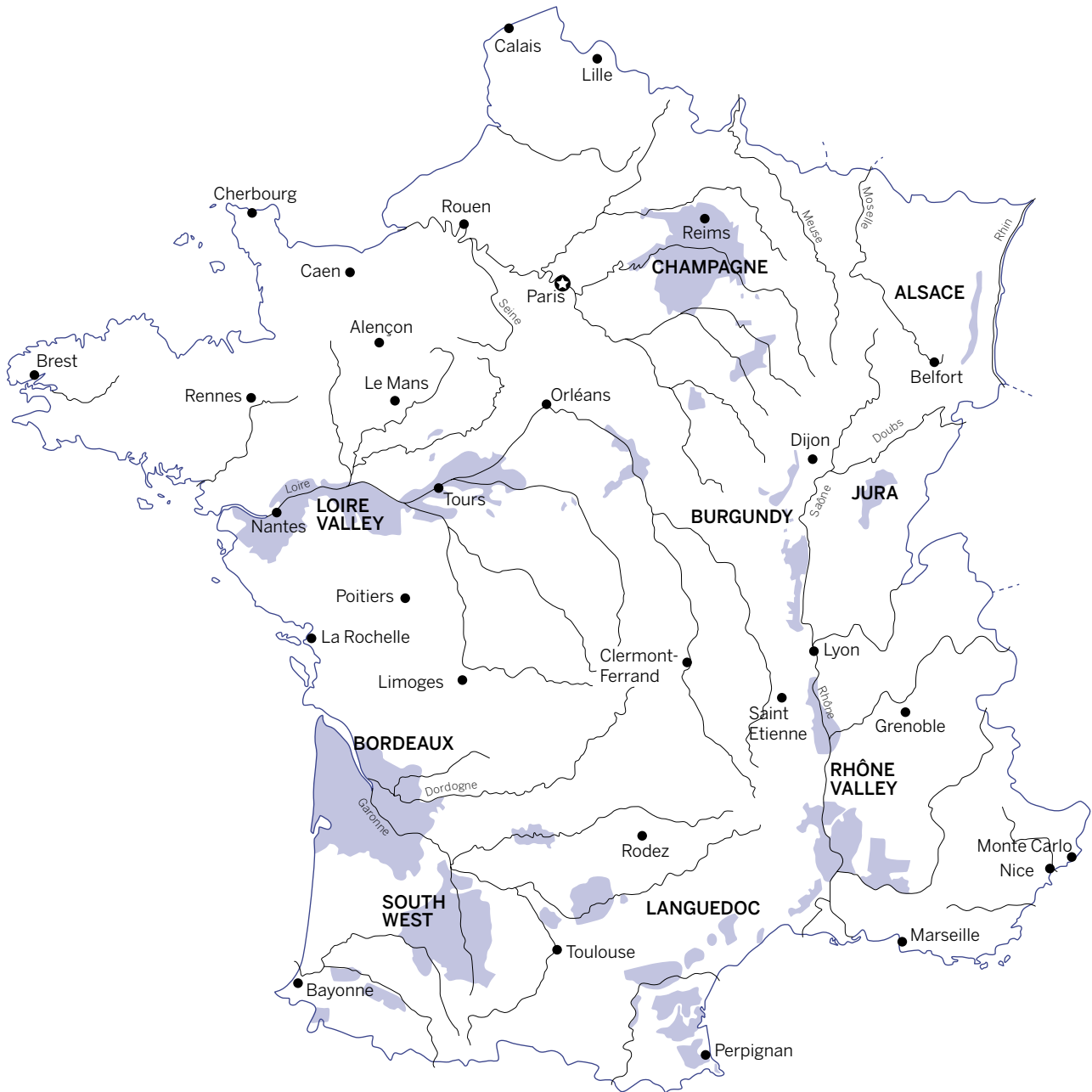


HARVEST REPORT

NORTHERN HEMISPHERE

2018





FRANCE

Following the disastrous 2017 harvest, 2018 saw a return to form for many of France's major wine-producing regions, and overall volumes were up twenty-five percent on the previous vintage. Some regions experienced rainy, humid weather in the spring and in June, giving rise to the risk of mildew, but the weather remained warm and dry throughout the key months of July, August and September, allowing grapes to ripen fully and for harvest to take place in ideal conditions. In general terms, the more northerly regions fared particularly well, but as a whole 2018 can be described in positive terms. The recent trend of consistently earlier harvests continued in 2018, indicating that climate change is starting to have a real effect.

ALSACE

2018 saw one of the earliest harvests on record for this northern region, which expects to produce a good volume of high-quality wines, showing both balance and concentration. From mid-June onwards, the weather stayed warm and dry, yielding an above-average sized crop of ripe and healthy grapes.

BORDEAUX

Following the 2017 vintage where, frost caused massive losses in the vineyards, 2018 saw a return to volumes in line with the ten year average. Winter and spring were wet, which gave a considerable risk of mildew, whilst hail storms between May and July affected some 10,000 hectares of vineyards.

However, the weather from July onwards remained warm and dry. This meant that those vineyards which were able to manage the early season's risks were able to harvest a healthy crop of grapes in ideal conditions.

BURGUNDY

Early signs from Burgundy suggest that 2018 could be amongst the region's largest ever harvests for white wines. A rainy start to the year helped to top up groundwater and delay budbreak until after the risk of late frosts was gone. This was followed by a warm spring, which prompted rapid growth of the vines, and the warm weather continued through the summer, helping to avoid the risk of disease and allowing the grapes to ripen fully. Harvest began on the 20th of August and finished around one month later - one of the earliest since 2003.

ONE OF THE
EARLIEST
HARVESTS SINCE

03

After a string of difficult vintages, 2018 has seen a spectacular return to form in Chablis, with both quality and quantity looking good. The region avoided the frost and hail that caused such difficulties in recent years and the hot and dry weather ensured that a good volume of ripe and healthy grapes were harvested. Similarly, favourable conditions in 2018 also ensured an extremely good crop in the Mâconnais and Côte Chalonnaise.

The Côte d'Or was spared the worst of 2017's difficulties and 2018 seems to have followed a similar story, with a second vintage on the trot being spared any cataclysmic weather events. Volumes were extremely healthy, although the hot, dry summer means that producers will have to work hard to make wines with balance and elegance.

BEAUJOLAIS

In Beaujolais, 2018 is being heralded as a stellar vintage, with a mixture of warm weather, sunshine, and just enough rain to keep the vines active combining to produce a near-perfect vintage. The clement conditions have produced a good quantity of healthy, ripe Gamay grapes, which thanks to September's fine weather were able to be harvested at leisure. At **Georges Duboeuf**, the harvest began on the 28th of August, a similarly early start as in 2017, although with a much rosier outlook: "We're looking at an exquisite vintage, both in terms of quantity and quality, from the South to the North of Beaujolais."

CHAMPAGNE

Record-breaking rainfall between November 2017 and January 2018, flowering in early June, and consistently good weather in July have meant that 2018 is only the fifth vintage in the last fifteen years to begin in August. Across the whole region, the maximum permitted yield was achieved, even allowing the houses to top up their reserve wines following the disappointing volumes achieved in 2017. It is not just the size of the harvest, but also the quality that is causing rapture in the region, with the grapes achieving good sugar levels and aromatic complexity.

At **Champagne Drappier**, Michel Drappier commented that "All the grapes varieties (we use all 7 permitted in Champagne) gave great results: that's incredibly rare! Pinots, in particular, were excellent, but so were Arbane and Petit Meslier."





LOIRE

In the Loire there is talk of the “vintage of the century”, with near perfect conditions at key times across the whole region. Although spring saw some rain and humidity, bringing a very real risk of mildew which required careful work in the vineyard to control, the extra water helped to set up the vines for the hot, dry weather that followed.

VINTAGE OF THE CENTURY

In Muscadet, rain during flowering gave some difficulties, but the hot, sunny weather that followed compensated for this and the wines are expected to be rich and fruity.

Similar conditions in Touraine saw an earlier than usual harvest, with Sauvignon expected to show richness, with more tropical characters than normal. The key region of Sancerre is predicting both good quality and good volumes, much needed after a string of poor vintages, with wines expected to show both richness and minerality.

LANGUEDOC

Flash floods late in the season and the ensuing chaos and loss of life brought this region into the global news, but luckily it seems that this had little effect on the harvest. Winter rainfall and a cool wet spring provided plenty of groundwater. Summer began late and brought a mix of hot weather and rainstorms, encouraging mildew. **Foncalieu** report that luckily the weather became more clement as the seasons progressed and September brought an Indian summer, with warm days and cool nights, allowing the harvest to take place at a measured pace and ensuring that the grapes were picked at perfect ripeness.

PROVENCE

An unusually wet spring in Provence had an adverse effect on yields, meaning another smaller than average harvest, although still larger than the drought-affected 2017. Mildew was a common problem in the region, demanding plenty of careful work and rigorous selection in the vineyards. This, coupled with growing demand for the pale rosé wines of the region, will undoubtedly cause upward pressure on pricing.



RHÔNE VALLEY

SOUTH

In the south, spring brought heavy rainfall and with that downy mildew, but those growers that acted promptly to treat the vines will not have suffered unduly and the onset of a dry summer largely controlled the problem. The good weather during the harvest period meant that producers were at liberty to harvest at optimal ripeness. Red varieties, especially Syrah, fared better than whites overall.

NORTH

Unusually, harvesting began earlier in the North than the South in 2018, with picking commencing in the last week of August for white varieties and the following week for reds, around one week ahead of the average. The dry weather saw Côte-Rôtie and Condrieu suffering low yields and some uneven ripening, but Crozes-Hermitage and Saint Joseph are expected to perform well, both for white varieties and Syrah. Overall the quality outlook is good and the size of the harvest will exceed 2017's output.



ITALY

Following the doom and gloom of 2017, 2018 has seen Italy rebound, with large, healthy crops in all of the major wine-producing regions. The total harvest came in 24% higher than 2017's annus horribilis, back in line with an average year. In general, picking commenced around one week later than the exceptionally early harvest of 2017.

TRENTINO-ALTO ADIGE

2018 saw a 23% volume increase over 2017's harvest. Heavy rains at the end of August threatened to jeopardise the harvest, but a return to more clement weather ensured that healthy grapes could be brought in. At **Mezzacorona** in Trentino, reports of 2018 are extremely positive. Volumes were up by 10% against the average and even more against the previous two vintages. Budding took place two weeks later than usual, which helped to avoid the risk of spring frosts and this, coupled with balanced rainfall and continued warm, sunny weather meant that ideal conditions were in place for a successful harvest. Picking began in mid-August with Chardonnay for the Rotari wines and early indications of quality are good, with fresh and aromatic whites and elegant and well-balanced reds expected.



VENETO

Following near perfect conditions during the 2018 growing season, Prosecco producers are hailing this harvest as one of the best ever, certainly in terms of size, with **Canevel** reporting a ten percent increase in volume over 2017. A warm summer followed by a cooler period with some rain in the weeks preceding harvest have allowed the grapes to develop good concentration and acidity levels.

At **Masi**, volumes have returned to average levels following 2017's short harvest, increasing by ten percent over the previous year. Spring was hot and sunny, interspersed with spells of abundant rainfall, encouraging good growth. In total, rainfall was not above the seasonal average and sparse bunches, due to poor flower set, meant that air flowed freely around the grapes, helping to avoid the risk of mildew. Quality is expected to be particularly high for Amarone from the Valpolicella region as cool, dry weather in September and October provided the perfect conditions for the grape drying process, whilst Soave also saw an average-size crop of healthy grapes harvested.

FRIULI-VENEZIA-GIULIA

Friuli saw a good harvest, with volumes considerably up on 2017. Record temperatures in early August accelerated the harvest and provided perfect conditions for picking ripe and healthy grapes. Masi began harvesting Pinot Grigio and Verduzzo on the 16th of August and concluded picking Merlot and Refosco in the final week of September, reporting a 15% increase in size over 2017.

PIEDMONT

Piedmont had an extremely successful 2018, with volumes up by 35% against the previous year. The harvest was a success across the region, with Barbera and Nebbiolo all looking good as well as the increasingly important Cortese.





TUSCANY/UMBRIA

Chianti Classico was able to report an extremely successful vintage, with a regular growing season and no extreme weather events leading to a good harvest of healthy grapes which are ripe yet fresh. **Antinori** report that the season went by without excessive heat and with enough rain to encourage plant growth. The size of the harvest was more normal following the shortages of 2017 and the wines themselves are elegant, with silky tannins, rather than big and powerful as they were in 2017. Bolgheri saw some humid conditions which presented the risk of mildew, which as ever needed careful work in the vineyard.

Frequent spring and summer rainstorms in Montalcino were similarly problematic, with a greater proportion of the harvest lost to disease. Umbria saw a volume increase of 40% over the previous vintage. Abundant rain through to the end of August threatened the health of the grapes, however a warm, dry September allowed harvest to take place in optimal conditions. Quality is expected to be good for both red and white varieties, albeit with moderate levels of alcohol and a lighter, more elegant profile than the previous vintage.

MARCHE/ABRUZZI

In Matelica, **Bisci** reported a slight increase in production. A cold winter was followed by an average spring. Summer was relatively warm, but the extreme heat of 2017 was not felt and there was increased rainfall over the previous year, which helped to avoid stress on the vines. The result was a good crop of ripe and healthy grapes. To the south, in Montepulciano country, **La Valentina** experienced a steady winter, with

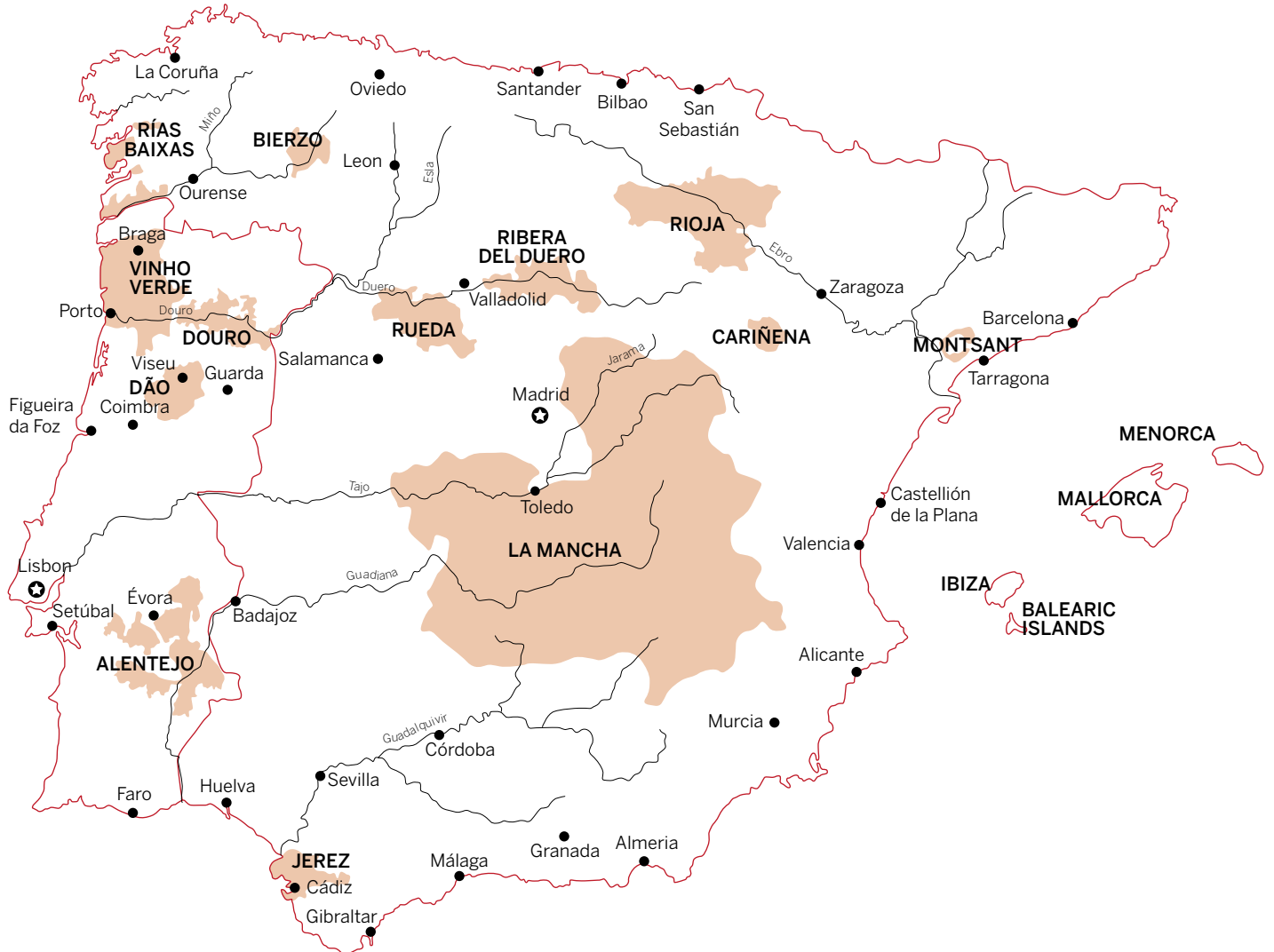
enough rain to replenish the reservoirs after 2017's drought. Spring and early summer saw continued rainfall, which required careful vineyard management to keep the grapes healthy. More normal conditions returned for the remainder of the season, leading to a harvest of both good quality and quantity of both white and red grapes.

SICILY/SARDINIA

In Sardinia, **Pala** had to be at their most vigilant to ensure that their usual high standards were maintained. Above-average rainfall and hot weather in August and September meant that mildew was a threat and as such, proactive vineyard management was necessary. Nonetheless, the volume harvested came in below the average, but overall quality looks good, with the wines showing fresh fruit characters and restrained alcohol levels.

Sicily had what can be at best described as an atypical vintage, with cool and wet weather experienced throughout the growing season. The picking window in Sicily can regularly span a ninety-day period and this vintage proved to be no exception, especially at **Tasca** who have five estates in

different regions of the island. At the Regaleali estate, harvest was slightly delayed by August rains, but picking began in the middle of the month and finished in mid-October, with a good crop of healthy and high-quality grapes expected. At the Tascante estate on Etna, rain in August and September prolonged the growing season, with harvest commencing at the beginning of October. This longer season will give elegant, fresh wines with good acidity, capable of ageing well. At **Feudo Arancio**, the below-average temperatures will see earlier-ripening Syrah with lower alcohol levels, silky tannins and a refreshing acidity, highlighting elegance over power, whilst the indigenous Nero d'Avola and Grillo, which ripen later, will show more typical character.



SPAIN

2018 was one of the coolest, wettest vintages on record in Spain and the total volume was in line with the long-term average, an increase of 34% on 2017's poor harvest and the largest harvest since 2014. It is likely that this sizeable harvest will bring bulk pricing down, but pricing will likely remain stable across DO and DOC level.



NORTHERN SPAIN

In the Rías Baixas, **Casal Caeiro** reported cold, wet weather throughout the beginning of the year and early spring, delaying the start of the growing season by around two weeks and also helping to replenish depleted water levels. The weather remained relatively cool throughout the early part of the summer but in August and September hot, sunny weather returned and growth in the vineyards accelerated, with harvest commencing on the 19th of September. A good crop of healthy grapes was returned and early analysis shows that the Albariño grapes have produced a must with good fruit concentration and balancing acidity.

RIOJA

Following the pressures of 2017, normality has returned to Rioja in 2018 with volumes up 30% over the previous vintage. Reports suggest that quality is very good in the most southerly Rioja Oriental, although rain has led to some reports of rot in Rioja Alta and Rioja Alavesa. The harvest was later than in recent years, partly due to cooler weather and also because recent harvests were earlier than normal.

At **Finca Valpiedra**, the favourable microclimate helped their grapes to ripen before the onset of the Autumn rains, ensuring that healthy fruit was brought in. Even temperatures throughout the season allowed for a good-sized harvest and quality looks good.

Overall, we can expect the wines from this vintage to be lower in alcohol and lighter than other recent vintages. In spite of the large harvest, it is worth noting that stocks are low following 2017's poor harvest, so pricing is likely to remain stable.

CASTILLA LA MANCHA

This region, the largest under vine in the world, normally relies on hot and dry conditions, however 2018 was much cooler and wetter than the norm. **Finca Antigua** certainly appreciated these conditions after five years of drought, although a freak hailstorm has impacted production somewhat. Nonetheless, quality is expected to be very good.

Overall volumes have increased markedly over 2017, but we can expect the wines from 2018 to be lower in alcohol, light and elegant in comparison to the previous vintage.

CASTILLA Y LEÓN

RUEDA

Good weather conditions prevailed in Rueda, with little rain and large temperature differences between day and night giving ripe grapes without losing acidity. 2018 saw this region record its largest ever harvest, and quality is good. The team at **Finca Montepedroso** are certainly optimistic following a warm, dry end to the summer which saw the grapes ripen perfectly to give "a wine of very good concentration and varietal expression charged with the characteristic complexity of Finca Montepedroso".

BIERZO

In spite of some late frosts, volume increased by 25% over the 2017 vintage and cooler, wetter weather should see more typical fresh and juicy wines produced in 2018 than in the previous vintage.



EUROPE



 **GERMANY**

2018 is looking like a truly outstanding vintage for Germany, both in terms of quality and quantity, with volumes 23% above the ten-year average. Harvesting began on the 6th of August, the earliest start on record, thanks to the hot, dry weather throughout the summer, allowing growers to pick ripe and healthy grapes.

VOLUMES 23% ABOVE TEN-YEAR AVERAGE

At first it was expected that yields could suffer due to the drought, but healthy volume increases were reported, particularly in the Mosel, which was up by 36% and in the Mittelrhein which was 64% up. Both reds and whites are expected to be rich and aromatic, with reds in particular benefitting from the warm weather.

 **SLOVENIA**

After four years of relatively low production, 2018 is being described by **Quercus** as “excellent and bountiful”, with an increase in production of 25% over the average. The region did not experience significant frosts or hail, and a sunny and warm September ensured that the grapes, especially red varieties, reached full ripeness. Their harvest commenced on the 23rd of August, significantly earlier than the previous year.

 **PORTUGAL**



 **UK**

England’s hot, dry summer provided ideal conditions for grape growing, with none of the late frosts that caused so much damage in 2017. Across the country, vineyard owners reported good yields of high-quality grapes – Hugh Liddell at **Cottonworth** is particularly positive, saying:

“2018 was extraordinary. We saw high yields while maintaining the best of quality. The balance between acidity and sugar was perfect as well as the well-developed aroma profile for all three classic varieties. As Cottonworth is planted on chalk there were no signs of water stress and when it did rain it came at the right time. Never have I seen such a year; however, I hope we see many more in the future!”

 **AUSTRIA**

The 2018 vintage in Austria was characterised by extended periods of heat and drought throughout the growing season, leading to the earliest harvest in decades. Warm weather began early in the year, with virtually no spring. Flowering took place between two and three weeks earlier than normal and the warm weather continued through the summer leading to the earliest harvest in decades, beginning in mid-August and reaching completion by early October. Arnold Holzer from **Zero-G** in Wagram highlighted the main challenge of the vintage was not ripeness or health, but correctly managing the vineyards through the extreme heat. In general terms we can expect the wines from this vintage to have higher alcohol levels and lower acidity than the norm, but volumes were not diminished by drought and overall quality is expected to be high.

SMALLEST HARVEST IN 20 YRS

Portugal experienced a difficult vintage in 2018, returning a 22% deficit in volume on 2017, giving the smallest harvest in the last twenty years. Reduction in yields was blamed on a heatwave in August and heavy rains that interrupted harvesting in October, as well as flash floods and storms in the Douro. All regions except Alentejo reported a fall in volume.

CALIFORNIA

Wineries in California are hailing 2018 as a dream vintage, with consistent and stable weather and none of the spikes in temperature that characterised the 2017 vintage, meaning that the grapes were able to undergo a gentle, lengthy ripening process. Overall, yields were up by two percent over the 2017 vintage and ahead of the historical average.

CENTRAL COAST SANTA LUCIA HIGHLANDS

The 2018 harvest is described as “remarkable” by Jeff Pisoni of **Pisoni Vineyards**. The winter saw plenty of rain and the cold temperatures saw budbreak occur two weeks later than normal. The season continued without any heat spikes, allowing for a calm and well-paced harvest, spanning almost one month, finishing on the 8th of October. Yields were average to above average depending on the vineyard and the wines are “vibrant, fresh and concentrated”.

NORTH COAST NAPA, SONOMA & CARNEROS

Napa experienced a balanced and even growing season, with a later start to picking than in recent years. Ideal conditions throughout the vintage mean that the grapes were able to enjoy a lengthy ripening period, which should ensure elegant and complex wines are produced in 2018. **Joseph Phelps** are particularly positive about this vintage, with Ashley Hepworth, their Napa Valley winemaker, stating that “the cooler 2018 growing season paved the way for phenological ripeness leading to outstanding flavor and excellent color development across our vineyards. It is looking to be an exceptional year.” A similar positive outlook is taken by Justin Ennis, winemaker for the Sonoma Coast vineyards: “The long, cool growing season is giving the fruit ample hang time for flavour development. We are seeing impeccable quality this year.”

